

Looking for Sam Damon

We read with great pleasure Colonel Sean J. Byrne's article "Looking for Sam Damon" in the May-June 1998 issue of *Military Review*. The article was excellent and very eye-opening. It is interesting that after almost 30 years, *Once An Eagle* by Anton Myrer is again being discussed among officers, noncommissioned officers and soldiers. This interest has not gone unnoticed, as the Army War College Foundation Press has reprinted the book (ISBN: 1-889927-01-5, Stackpole Books, Mechanicsburg, PA, \$15.00).

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Review "Conflict"

Lieutenant Colonel George Pogge's review of the book *Civil Military Operations in the New World* by John T. Fishel (Praeger Press, Westport, CT, 1997) in the May-June 1998 issue of *Military Review* certainly demonstrates that he not only gave this book a thorough reading and careful analysis, but that he also understood its material—characteristics not always shared by more than a few reviewers.

Despite Pogge's obvious command of the book and its material, his review largely centers on Fishel's hands-on experience in dealing with Operation *Just Cause* in 1989. Not a big problem, but Fishel deals with far more missions than just that operation. Not only does the book discuss other civil-military operations, it deals with the inevitability of political concerns that dominate—and will continue to dominate—ongoing and future military operations. Pogge never really cites Fishel's obvious concern with the political realities of military missions.

However, to me, Pogge's review reads more like a book *report* than a

review. He not only summarizes the author's ideas, but he repeats what the author wrote about these ideas. (A military version of *Cliffs Notes* for the reading impaired?) Since book reviews are requested to be written within editorial guidelines of 800 words or less, should not the review tempt the reader into reading the book, not just the review?

First Lieutenant Gene Del Bianco, USA, 19th Special Forces Group, Dedham, Massachusetts

Leader of Character

Whenever I get really depressed about the "state of the officer corps," something great happens—such as a US Army major publishing a leadership essay invoking the teachings of Saint Augustine. Thank you, Major John Mark Mattox, for your poignant, yet timely, leadership essay titled "Fifth-Century Advice for 21st-Century Leaders" in the May-June 1998 *Military Review*.

Lieutenant Colonel Ralph Peters, USA, Retired, Warrenton, Virginia

"The Rommel Myth"—Continued

In his letter to the editor in the May-June 1998 *Military Review*, Joseph Forbes offers a studious criticism of my *Military Review* article "The Rommel Myth" (September-October 1997). Forbes' strong feelings—shared by legions of others—that Rommel should be praised for his tactical prowess despite egregious operational-level failures will continue as the common view. But the military professionals for whom "The Rommel Myth" was written must cast a cold, unsparing eye on military history, gathering lessons for future conflicts while discarding sentiment and myth. In that spirit, I address a few of Forbes' interesting points.

Rommel supporters often posit the word "if" to defend their hero. But, "if" Malta had fallen to the

Germans—they took Crete in 1941—and "if" they had landed more supplies in North Africa, Rommel would have been just as confused and unfocused. Principally, Rommel's operational-depth problem was one of overextended ground lines, truck shortages and British air action—not shipping tonnage. Moreover, the key issue for Germany was resource allocation. Manpower, equipment and supplies sent to North Africa depleted the Eastern Front, where Germany's survival was at stake.

Nor does military-strategic guidance excuse Rommel. The primary source of the German-Italian confusion was not incompetence—as Rommel would have it—but absence of purpose and achievable outcome. The German higher military staffs, in fact, expended remarkably little time and effort toward North Africa, as they soon realized its futility. This was propaganda war, with Adolf Hitler as sponsor and Joseph Goebbels as *spinmeister*.

Finally, even considering a German victory at El Alamein is fanciful at best. Rommel's advance toward El Alamein was, well, absurd. His forces were hopelessly inferior on the ground and in the air. He was, in his own words, "crushed by the enemy weight." World War II saw brilliant practitioners of operational art—Germany's Erich von Manstein and Great Britain's William Slim—but Rommel's lessons to us come from his abject failures.

Colonel James R. Robinson, USAR, Assistant Chief of Staff (IMA), US Army Industrial Operations Command, Rock Island Arsenal, Illinois

"Educating DACs"

Your excellent article by Susan C. Foster and Brenda Small in the March-April 1998 *Military Review* about educating Department of the Army civilians (DACs) provides a spot for two additional bits of information. First, the Army is not alone in this enterprise. The Federal Executive Institute (FEI), Charlottesville-

ville, Virginia, offers a great opportunity for prolonged association with senior executives from all over government. The school is 30 years old and growing. Perhaps Army planners and trainers should think of it as a postgraduate site, not competing with the top Army courses, but as a special reward for major achievers. DACs do attend FEI in fair numbers.

Second, there is "life" after your career is over. The Defense Production Act of 1950, which has since been amended and extended, set up the National Defense and Emergency Resources (NDER) National Defense Executive Board. This is a cadre of industrial leaders and retired senior federal employees who make mobilization happen. However, in the current political environment, mobilization is not an urgent topic, so both it and the NDER are falling into limbo—or might conceivably do so. Responsibility for both belongs to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). But if reason prevails, senior DACs who retire could phase into the NDER system and continue to contribute to America's national defense.

In fact, the Association for National Defense and Emergency Resources' active membership is largely composed of NDER appointees. The NDER's purpose is to promote good management of US national security resources, to promote augmentation support to designated federal agencies and to upgrade its members' capabilities.

Hercule Poirot and other astute readers will have concluded that I am a graduate of FEI and am active in NDER. Both have proved rewarding to me, and DA planners would do well to think broadly about what DACs can do, and continue to do, in the service of their nation.

James W. Kerr, *Easton, Maryland*

The Heavy Division

I enjoyed the article "Building the 21st-Century Heavy Division," by General William Hartzog and Lieutenant Colonel James Diehl, *Military Review* (March-April 1998). The authors provide an excellent description of where the Army heavy division is going, backing it up with solid technical and organizational information. I find pieces such as this,

which present the "nuts and bolts" of military matters, especially useful in my work as a simulations designer. They are also useful to update colleagues on current defense affairs. I would like to see more articles like this one in the future.

Joseph Miranda, *Editor,
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Liggett Legacy Lives On

The May-June 1998 edition of *Military Review* was an outstanding issue. I was pleasantly surprised to find an article by Major Michael E. Bigelow titled "Knowing and Doing" about General Hunter Liggett, the 1st Corps and then First Army commander, during World War I in France.

I was extremely pleased to read an expanded version of his role in our Army and World War I. This article will serve as a starting point for remembering this great, but largely forgotten general. His mental agility and constant study prepared him for his greatest challenge—commanding a million men in France during the

Meuse-Argonne Offensive. At that time, it was the largest American troop formation to take the field under a single commander. Hunter Liggett retired from active service in 1921. He died at the Presidio of San Francisco on 30 December 1935 and rests with his wife Harriet in Officers' Row at the Presidio National Military Cemetery.

During the past year I have introduced hundreds of captains taking the Reserve Component nonresident Combined Arms and Services Staff School and majors taking the nonresident Command and General Staff Officer Course at Fort Hunter Liggett, California, to Liggett's legacy of professional knowledge and preparation. I will now heartily recommend Bigelow's article as the starting point for getting acquainted with Hunter Liggett and for studying his "knowing and doing" leadership style. He well deserves to be placed as an example in our senior-level leadership manuals.

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Star-Spangled Banner Undergoes Conservation Work

The Star-Spangled Banner, the 185-year-old flag that inspired the words to the *National Anthem*, was removed from exhibit on 1 December 1998 and laid flat in Flag Hall at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History. There it will undergo a three-year conservation process made possible by generous contributions from Polo Ralph Lauren, the Pew Charitable Trusts and other foundations and individuals.

Cables, vertical beams and a specially constructed trolley system were designed to lower the flag and its aluminum frame from its three-story-high display in Flag Hall. "The most challenging part of the take-down was eliminating risk to the flag and ensuring that no additional stress was placed on it," said museum director Spencer R. Crew.

A special suspension system supported the flag's structure from top to bottom, keeping the flag stationary during the move. The 30-by-34-foot flag, wrapped in a white protective "envelope" made of a special, non-abrasive material, now rests on a horizontally elevated support bed to hold it steady. Museum conservators will work from a special rolling gantry—a movable platform—to examine the flag and refine their conservation plan. In February 1999, the Star-Spangled Banner will be moved to a new conservation lab located on the museum's second floor. Visitors will be able to view the preservation work through windows in the lab throughout the conservation process. A new, permanent exhibit is scheduled to open in 2002.